

2.8 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

2.8.1 Affected Environment

Pedestrian facilities in the extended study area include sidewalks along streets, crosswalks at intersections, and walkways through the parks and squares. These facilities are enhanced in selected locations to accommodate high numbers of tourists, including wider sidewalks at such locations as along Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets. Locations where traffic had previously been restricted were converted to pedestrian use, such as East Executive Avenue.

2.8.2 Impacts Analysis

The security action did not restrict pedestrian access and in fact increased it by creating a traffic-free zone on Pennsylvania Avenue between Madison Place and 17th Street. The White House Security Review recommended not only that vehicular traffic be prohibited from traveling along Pennsylvania Avenue but also that the area be converted to a pedestrian mall. The Security Review notes that “Based on consultations with experts on security, public access, and the history of the White House, it is the opinion of the Review that this proposal will provide the general public with maximum pedestrian access to our nation’s most important historic structure while averting a verified security concern” (White House Security Review, Pg 42).

The FHWA transportation analysis states that conflicts between traffic and pedestrians are well managed in the extended study area, with the exception of locations around the Farragut West Metrorail station on I Street and at the Connecticut Avenue-17th Street-K Street intersection. These conflicts existed before the security action.

The FHWA transportation analysis includes a discussion of the effects upon tourists. The analysis states that observations of tourists and visitors on both weekdays and weekends showed no effect upon pedestrian access in the area. The analysis describes a survey of tourists and visitors in the White House area. The survey found that 85.1 percent of the people surveyed said that the vehicular traffic restriction did not cause a problem in their access to the area. Of those people who said that access was a problem, the reasons given were that parking was too far away and that the walking distances were too long.

Information on pedestrian accidents was sought to assess whether the security action affected the risk to pedestrians. Systematically compiled pedestrian-accident information are available from the DCDPW only for 1995. The data show that there were seven pedestrian-vehicle accidents in the vicinity of the White House in 1995. Four occurred before the security action and three afterward. The small number of accidents and the short amount of time for which data are available do not demonstrate any patterns that would indicate impacts.